

# The Rugby Rookie Primer

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1 What is Rugby?

Chapter 2 Pitch and Kit

Chapter 3 The Basics

Chapter 4 Positions

Chapter 5 Rucks and Mauls

Chapter 6 Skills required

Chapter 7 Scoring

Chapter 8 The Line Out

Chapter 9 Penalties

Chapter 10 Miscellaneous

Appendix 1 Positional descriptions and attributes

## Chapter 1

### What is Rugby?

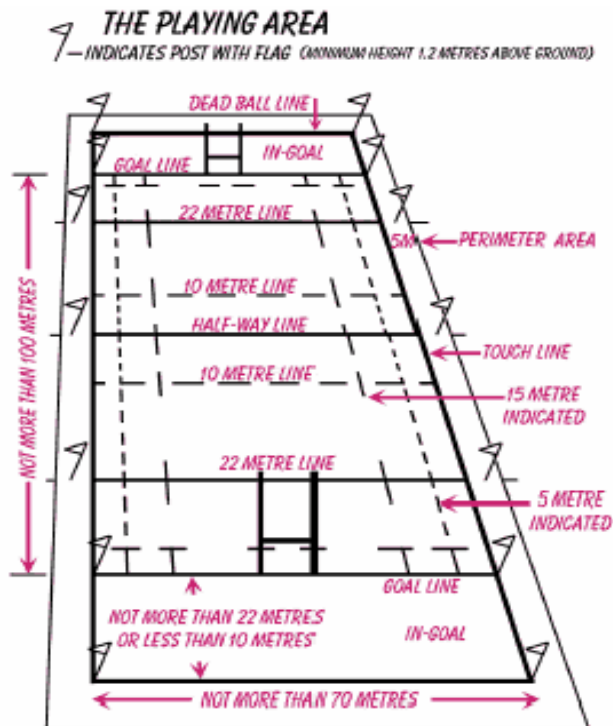
Rugby is more than a sport. It's a passion. It's Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for the rest of your life. People will tell you it's a cross between soccer and football, but that doesn't *really* prepare you for rugby. There is *nothing* like it on or off the field.

How did rugby originate? There is that tired, hackneyed legend of the young and ever-so rebellious William Webb Ellis, who one day, during a soccer match at Rugby School in England, decided to pick up the ball and run with it. However, most sports historians postulate that back in the day it was considered amusement for one town to try and carry a somewhat startled young pig to another town's village square. They would employ various methods of dodging, dashing, passing, or just plowing through en masse to achieve this. These primitive contests became refined over time and emerged as rugby and soccer. To the casual observer of a rugby match today, rugby seems remarkably close to that version of its roots than some picked up soccer ball. Well, wherever it came from, today's rugby is, at its best, a blend of strategy, strength, speed, and instinct. At it's least, it is organized and glorious mayhem. **The object is to score more points than the other team by carrying, passing, and kicking the ball.**

## Chapter 2

### Pitch and Kit

We play on a **pitch**. As you can see from the diagram below, the pitch is 100 meters (110 yards) long and 70 meters (75 yards) wide. There are four important lines on the pitch:



The **halfway line**. The halfway line indicates where the pitch divides in half! Kick-offs to start the match, kick-offs to start the second half and kick-offs after each time a team scores are started here.

The **22-meter lines** (25 yard-line). The 22-meter line is a strategic point on the pitch. We won't talk about it too much in this guide, but you will learn that it is a very important line, especially when it comes to kicking.

The **goal lines**. The goal lines mark where a player has to cross in order to score.

The **touchlines**. The touchlines mark where players go out-of-bounds along the length of the pitch. In rugby speak, "**touch**" is what we call the area outside of the playing field. When a player goes out-of-bounds, he is said to be "in touch." For now one important, but tricky, thing to remember is that *the lines are included in what is beyond them*. For example, when a ball or a player goes in touch (out of bounds) both the touchline and the area beyond the line is the out-of bounds

area. Once a player or a ball touches the touchline or the area beyond the line, the ball or the player is “in-touch” or out of bounds. Similarly, the goal line both marks and is part of the “in-goal” area. If a player places the ball on the goal line, he scores.

### The Kit

Your rugby **kit** is simply what you wear to the pitch. It consists of

rugby jersey

pair of rugby shorts (basketball shorts or bike shorts or running shorts won't do)

Soccer-style cleats (called **boots** in rugby)

mouth guard (mandatory!)

A tip for rookies: leave your necklaces and earrings at home.

## Chapter 3

### The Basics

#### Begin with a Kick-Off

This is taken at the halfway line. Like soccer, rugby is a continuous game—the clock does not stop! The game is divided into **two halves, no more than 40 minutes long**. Unlike American football, there is no stopping for set plays. **The only time play stops is because a penalty or injury has occurred**. Any time taken for injury is added on to the half in which it occurs. The halftime break lasts no more than 10 minutes. Substitutions are limited to seven per team. Substitutions may only be made when the ball is dead and with the permission of the referee. If a player is substituted, that player can't return and play in that match even to replace an injured player—unless his substitution was caused by injury. The object, of course, is to score as many points as possible in those 80 minutes.

#### Playing Rugby

Playing rugby is about getting the ball and using the ball while maintaining possession. Any player who is on-side may take the ball and run with it. Let's say you caught the ball. You have options:

*You can pass the ball.* But **the ball may only be passed backward or laterally (side-ways)**. If you pass it forward, it's a penalty (called straightforwardly enough, a forward pass). This is the big difference between rugby and American football.

*You can kick the ball forward,* either on the ground like a soccer ball or in the air. Unlike American football, in rugby, kicking is often an excellent strategic move.

*You can hand off the ball to another player.* You don't have to pass the ball to get it to another player.

*You can run with the ball.* This is what most folks do.

One thing that confuses rookies is that they think that once a ball is dropped or the ball carrier is tackled, the play is dead. It isn't!! **The ball is always alive, even when it's on the ground**. If the ball is on the ground, anyone that is on their feet can pick it up and play it. The only time the ball is dead is when it goes into touch (out of bounds). Any player may tackle, hold or shove an opponent **holding the ball**. This "holding the ball" bit is important. Unlike American football, if you shove, tackle, hold or block any person who does not have the ball, it's a penalty called **obstruction** and it is *cheating*. You should never cheat. Regardless, whatever a player does, it must be in accordance with the Laws of the Game. Laws? Rugby doesn't have rules, it has Laws. And just like laws in

real life, they are subject to the strict or loose interpretation of those who enforce them. In rugby, that person is the referee.

### **The Officials**

There is one referee and two touch judges in every match who enforce the Laws. The ref is the sole judge of the Laws of the Game. His (or her) word is final. There is no appeal. The touch judges are there to call where a player or a ball goes in touch (out of bounds). The important thing to remember is that there is only one referee. It may seem impossible (or at least improbable) that one ref can see the actions of thirty other people on a huge pitch, but you'd be surprised what a good ref can see. The important thing to remember with refs is that you can't talk back to them. Not even the coach can talk to the ref. The only people authorized to talk to the ref during a game are the captains of each team. Smart players learn to play to the ref—they figure out how the ref is going to call certain offenses and adjust their play to the ref's style. This is particularly true when it comes to how strictly the ref is enforcing the "on-side" laws.

### **The Concept of "On side"**

*Anybody* may play the ball. You may run with it, pass it, kick it, or tackle an opponent who has it - provided that you are **on-side**. Perhaps the most confusing aspect about rugby for players and observers alike is the concept of being on side. Which is unfortunate because it's very simple, generally speaking. Rookies, this is key: if you are *behind the ball* you are **on-side**. If you are *in front of the ball* you are **off-side**. And being offside means you are out of the play—until by the action of you, your team-mate or your opponent put you **on-side**. You are not in trouble when you are **off-side**, but if you influence play in any way from an **off-side** position or attempt to participate in the game you will be penalized

Some examples:

Say your teammate has the ball and wants to pass it to you. As he's getting ready to pass, you move ahead of him. Now he can't pass it to you because you are ahead of the ball (not behind it) and offside. Besides, if he threw the ball to you, it will be a forward pass.

Say your teammate has the ball, and wants to pass it to you. He completes the pass to you. Can you throw it back to him? Only if he's behind the ball again.

## Chapter 4 Positions

Every position on the team has a specific function. The team is generally divided into *forwards* and *backs*. Forwards (Nos. 1-8) tend to be big and strong. Backs (Nos. 9-15) tend to be fast and agile. Forwards win the ball for the backs to use to score.

First let's talk about the **scrum**. A **scrum** occurs after various minor infringements of the law, such as when the ball becomes tied up, and other times you'll learn about later. It is a face-off of sorts, where each team is contesting to get the ball, and a favorite among forwards. This is what a scrum (with backs in a defensive alignment) looks like:



Here's how the scrum works.

The forwards from each team line up across from each other, and bind together in three rows: a row of three, a row of two and another row of three players.

On the referee's mark, the two teams "engage." This forms the scrum.

Starting on the left side of the scrum, the scrumhalf (No. 9) puts the ball straight into the scrum, between the two opposing front rows.

The hookers (No. 2) from each team try to win the ball, using their feet to kick the ball back. No hands allowed.

The ball is then channeled back to the Number Eight who lets it out to the scrumhalf (who has already moved to the back of the scrum).

The scrumhalf passes the ball out to the fly half (No. 10), who, along with the other backs (No. 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) will implement some play to try to score.

Traditionally, there's always been a bit of good-natured ribbing between the pack and the backs. But the pack vs. back thing is really a bit misleading when you look at how a scrum actually works. The scrum really works as a series of mini-units, each with specific jobs to do. Let's take a closer look at each of the mini-units.

### **The Tight Five**

The Tight Five consists of the two props, the hooker and the two locks. These players are primarily ball winners.

*Props.* There are two props (also called *prop forwards*) in each scrum. In the scrum the props' main role is to provide a solid platform and support the hooker. The loose-head prop (No.1) plays on the left-hand side (loose head=left hand), and the tight head prop (No. 3) plays on the right-hand side. Props are stocky and strong, usually with a strong neck and broad shoulders. These are guys that typically enjoy contact.

*Hooker.* One of the most important roles on the team, the hooker (No. 2) is the main ball winner on the team. In the scrum, the hooker wins the ball by striking it back to the No. 8.

*Lock.* The locks (No. 4 and No. 5) are the engines of the scrum, providing a stable source of power for the front row. Players in this position are usually the tallest and strongest guys on the team, and possess superior leg strength.

### **The Back Row**

The Back row consists of the two flankers and the No. 8.

*Flankers.* The flankers (No. 6 and No. 7) are the most aggressive guys on the team. Typically flankers (also called *wing forwards*) are relentless attackers. Flankers have to have superior cardiovascular fitness. Flankers also have to be good ball handlers because they often find themselves supporting the backs.

*No. 8.* The No. 8 is a key position on the team. His primary duty in the scrum is to keep the ball at his foot until the scrumhalf is ready to pass it out. The No. 8 has the option to break off the scrum and pick up the ball and run it, so he also has to be a tactician, constantly reading the defense.

## Backs



### The Halfbacks

The halfbacks are the scrumhalf, and fly half. This duo comprises the two most important positions on the team. These two provide the crucial link between the forwards and the backs. They are typically the most skilled persons on the field. *Scrumhalf.* The scrumhalf (No.9) is the second most important position on the team. As the link between forwards and backs, he is the pivot around which the majority of the attacks take place. He has to be a quick decision-maker (pass? kick? run?), and the quality of that decision will affect the entire team. The scrumhalf is also one of the most skilled positions on the team— he has to know a variety of passes, kicks and other techniques that no one else on the team has to master

*Fly half.* The fly half (No. 10) is *the* most important position on the team. A team with a good fly half is blessed because they are hard to find and even harder to mold. Typically, he's very calm, very clear thinking and very skillful. His position requires him to be able to read the game and anticipate holes in the defense. He has to be a superior tactician. Like the scrumhalf, he has to be excellent at many skills, particularly handling and passing, managing contact and tackles and kicking. The fly half determines alignment for the rest of the backs. With the help of the inside center, he also creates space for the three quarters to maneuver in.

### The Three quarters

The three quarters are also known as the finishers. Once the forwards have won the ball, and the halfbacks have distributed it, it is up to the three quarters to keep the ball alive until there is a try. The three quarters are the two centers, two wings and the fullback.

*Centers.* There are two centers. The inside centre (No. 12) typically works with the scrumhalf and fly half to create the platform on which the rest of the backs will score. The outside centre (No. 13) will usually work more with the wings and the fullback. In both cases, their main job is to create space for the remaining backs to score in. They have superior handling and passing skills, and have excellent tackling skills. Centers also have good peripheral vision, and excellent catching and kicking skills.

*Wings.* The wings (No. 11 and No. 14) are the fastest men on the field. They are usually the guys that score the tries. Wings must have excellent timing and

constantly read the other team's backs for hints of counter attack. There are two types of wings, blind-side wing and open side wing, and wings will play both during a game, depending on where the scrum is positioned on the pitch (don't worry about figuring it out now). Speed and agility are the main physical requirements for a wingman. They also have superior passing and handling skills.

*Fullback.* Another key position on the team, the fullback (No. 15) is the last line of defense. In the modern game, he has become the surprise element, unpredictably entering the backline to help penetrate the defense. A fullback needs many qualities and skills. He has to be brave because he'll take most tackles at full speed. He also has to be able to catch the high kick while under intense pressure. It is usually the fullback who catches/retrieves kicks. The fullback is usually the best kicker on the team. He is also very fast. Also, like centers, he has superior passing and handling skills.

# Chapter 5

## Phases of Play

### Phases of Play

The key to understanding the mayhem called a rugby match is understanding the **phases of play** in rugby.

The first phase is always a **set play**, like a restart, scrum or lineout. What you need to know right now is that each of these set pieces involves getting into established formations to re-initiate play. Set play is very organized and somewhat predictable. Once the ball is out of the set formation (i.e., out of the scrum or lineout) **open** or "**loose**" **play** begins. Loose play is characteristically free flowing and spontaneous. The successive stages of open or loose play are broken up into what are called phases of play.

The different phases in loose play are marked by what are called **breakdowns**. Breakdowns are rucks and mauls, and named so because they break down the continuity of play, the flow of the game. Attacking teams will try to avoid breakdowns because it means the defending team has been successful in stopping their advance. There can be infinite phases of play.

## Chapter 6

### Skills Required

Backs and forwards alike need to develop certain rugby-specific abilities. These skills are the foundation of all play, simple and complex. These basic skills are passing, handling, kicking, tackling and ball in contact.

#### Passing



We will begin with the **pass**. In rugby, the pass must be *backwards*. This explains the diagonal line-up of the backs when they are in an offensive set. Technique may vary, but the important concept here is *catchability*. Using both hands, the ball is passed and should arrive in the receiver's hands upright and solid. You should lead the receiver so that he is bursting on to it and thus gaining yardage even though he starts behind you. Aim for the receiver's hands out in front of their chest.

The distance between passer and receiver varies depending on how skilled they are, the particular play, and the weather. The receiver stays at an angle sufficiently deep to receive the ball running at top speed. The passer should always turn his body toward the receiver and *pass the ball a little in front of the receiver* so that he will catch the ball while accelerating onto it.

## Handling



All rugby players need good ball-handling skills to cope with the different demands of the attacking game: running with the ball, passing and catching at pace (at actual game speed). To truly succeed as a rugby player, you must be skillful in executing the basic ball-handling techniques. During play the ball may arrive at different angles, heights, speeds and forces. A ball that arrives at a difficult angle may affect your ability to keep possession. For example, a pass that arrives from behind at knee height may be difficult to catch and bring to your waist while you are running at pace and attempting to maintain balance. Becoming used to the unique shape of the ball early on will give you the confidence to cope with the unexpected when it happens - such as a ball bouncing wildly off the turf or a pass thrown too high or away from you. It is to your own advantage whenever possible to carry the ball in two hands. This allows you to either pass or keep the ball safe when a tackler grabs hold of you. It also allows you to make a more accurate passes in open play. When holding or moving the ball around your body, you must grab the ball firmly in your hands with the fingers spread across the seams. The seams will help you maintain your grip. *Use fingers to control the ball not the palms.*

You will often see a ball carrier will hold the ball along his or her forearm or tuck it into the ribs near the elbow when running in the open field. This is a safe carrying style and allows players to run more quickly because they can pump their arms with a running motion. However, by tucking the ball, your players will make it difficult to readjust the ball in order to pass. When running with the ball tucked in, you must always be prepared to readjust your grip to pass the ball with two hands on the ball.

## Kicking



**Kicking** is another staple of this game.

The **pop kick** is a popular item. It is a short up-in-the air kick that you can field yourself. For example, if there is no one to pass to, and you have a defender closing in on you, you can just chip it over him and run right past the defender to catch your own kick. You've got the momentum - he'll have to turn around to chase it and you. And remember, he cannot touch you if you don't have the ball.

The **grubber kick** is similar to a soccer dribble. You punch it along the ground with your foot and, as always, *pursue* it. Because of the shape of the ball, the grub kick will take some weird hops, making it hard to handle.

All kicking should be done *strategically* and not in a panic. It is important to place kicks in a spot where your team can regain possession. Longer kicks may be used too, where the ball is kicked to a part of the field that your teammates can get to first or make life miserable for an opponent who does.

The ball may also **be kicked into touch** (out-of-bounds) for to gain territorial advantage or relieve pressure when you are backed up to your own goal line.

Of Note:

If you are **BEHIND YOUR OWN 22 METER** line and kick it directly to touch (out-of-bounds), the ball is brought back into play at **THE POINT THAT IT CROSSES THE LINE INTO TOUCH**. This is a common strategy that can get you out of hot water when the opposition is breathing down your goal line. This is also true when you have been awarded a penalty kick anywhere on the field. However, if you kick it directly into touch when you are **IN FRONT OF YOUR OWN 22 METER** line, the ball comes back into play from the **POINT WHERE IT WAS KICKED** - meaning no yardage gained.

Finally, you can dribble the ball or give it a good whack with your foot anytime it's loose on the ground, but possession is 9/10th of the law in rugby. It's always best to secure the ball for your side.

## Tackling



You've got to **tackle**. When you do, the tackled player has no choice but to release the ball, leaving it fair game for either side. Tackling well and decisively is vital. You should hit them low, squeeze their legs together, and twist them so you land on top. Tackling will be covered thoroughly in practices. The technical definition of a tackle is when a player is held by an opposing player and *at least one knee* is touching the ground. Tripping and falling down by yourself doesn't count. Rookies: remember, if you are tackled you **must** play the ball immediately, or its **penalty**. You may pick the ball up immediately upon gaining your feet.

## Ball in Contact

Ball in contact is a key strategic skill. Why? It's about controlling the ball on our own terms. You will want to have a repertoire of skills you can call upon should you find yourself in a situation where you are tackled or restricted. Managing contact allows us control how play will develop after contact so you can release the ball securely to a teammate and we can continue the attack.



## Chapter 7 Scoring

### Method No. 1

Well, first in our hearts is the **try**. It has similarities to a touchdown in American football, but with a *significant* difference. A **try** is accomplished by bringing the ball into your opponent's in-goal and *touching it to the ground*. Control, downward pressure, and simultaneous hand/ball/ground contact are essential. Woe to the rookie who gleefully gallops over the line and in his excitement forgets this key factors, and spikes the ball. Sorry kids, this isn't the NFL; the try won't count that way.



A try is worth **5 points**. The priority is to get the ball over and down, but if possible, you want to *place it near the middle*. The reason for this is that after a try, you have a chance to make it 7 points by kicking the ball through the posts (uprights). This is called a **conversion**. Unlike the field goal kick in American football, the kick is made from *any distance back*, but *in line with where the ball was touched down*. It is far easier for a kicker to make a conversion when he is in front of the posts than at an angle. The kicker may use a **place kick** (where he uses a tee) or **drop-kick** (where he holds the ball with both hands forward, drops the ball, and then kicks it on the rebound). After a try, the game starts up again with a kick off (a drop-kick) to the *team who has just scored*. In any case, it's back to the 50-meter line as quickly as the kicking team can collect itself. There is no official game stoppage.

## Method No.2

The other way to score is **by going for post** (kicking a field goal).



This is worth **3 points**. Most commonly it is made when a **penalty** is called within the range of your team's best kicker. It may be place kicked or drop kicked from the point where the penalty was awarded (the **mark**). Rarer in recreational-level rugby is a spontaneous drop kick through the posts during play. This is allowed at any time but is very difficult to do. Unless you're a retired NFL punter, we don't recommend rookies, or even seasoned players, do this. If a team should touch the ball down in its OWN in-goal (better you than them), two things can happen

1. If your team is responsible for bringing the ball in, a scrum, 5 meters back from the try line, will be awarded to the other team (meaning their scrumhalf gets to put it in).
2. If the ball traveled into the in-goal on the other team's impetus, your team will be awarded a 22-meter **drop out**. A **drop out (a.k.a. 22-meter drop kick)** means that your team may drop-kick the ball from any point behind the 22-meter line. The other team must *retreat immediately* to the other side of the 22. Remember this retreating business when the drop out is against you. Also learn to run backwards. You should never take your eyes off the ball!

## Chapter 8

# The Line Out

### Line Outs

If the ball is kicked, carried, or otherwise escorted into touch (“out-of-bounds”), its re-entry onto the field is by way of a **lineout**. A line out is kinda like the jump ball in basketball.



Here's how it works:

Two rows of forwards standing up (one column per team) line up 5 meters in from the touch line and perpendicular to it. A player from the team who *didn't* touch it last before it went onto touch gets to throw the ball in, down the tunnel. An example of a line out The ball can be thrown any distance as long as it flies *straight* between the columns. Like catchers to pitchers in baseball, teams use signals to let their players know where the thrower intends to throw it.

Certain players in the line out are designated as **jumpers**. The rest support and protect them in a variety of ways that you will soon be learning. The ball may be thrown beyond the line out or drilled to the first person, but it must travel the initial 5 meters before it may be played. The line out can extend out to 15 meters.

During a line out the backs line up in much the same way as during a scrum, with one notable exception. In a scrum they must only remain behind the Number Eights or last person's foot. In a line out they (or anyone not participating directly) must remain 10 METERS back until the line out is completely over. No **creeping** (moving in before the line out is over) or it's a penalty.

## Chapter 9

### Penalties

Let's talk a little more about **penalties**.

For minor infractions of the law a simple scrum down will do. A forward pass is one such infringement. The infamous **knock on** is another minor infringement. A knock on is where you drop or bump the ball forward with any part of your upper body. The scrum is awarded to the non-offending team. A scrum may also be called when a ruck or maul goes too long without the ball coming out, or if the referee judges it to be dangerous.

It might behoove you to learn (at some point) the signals a referee uses to indicate what he or she has called. After the whistle the ref will usually give the **mark** with his foot and indicate, with his arm angled *down* toward one team or the other, who gets to put the ball in. The hookers then usually line up at the mark and the rest of the pack comes in around them. A **free kick** is awarded for slightly less secure infractions than a penalty kick (hooker striking too early for the ball, for instance). The difference is that you are not allowed to go for post. The referee indicates a free kick by extending a bent arm toward the team who gets to take it.

For a **penalty kick**, the referee extends his arm *upward* toward the team to whom he's awarding it. A penalty kick is commonly given for:

obstruction (blocking someone who doesn't have the ball)

offsides

hands in a ruck

play deemed dangerous by the referee

A penalty kick is usually awarded at the place the infraction occurs. A mark will be given and that is the point through which the kick **MUST** be taken. To execute a penalty kick you must move the ball visibly through the mark with your foot. This could mean anything from a short tap (after which it may be picked up and moved in any legal way) to a long punt (the space directly above the mark counts as the mark). The opposition must **RETREAT** 10 meters immediately when a penalty kick is awarded -- giving quite an advantage. If you ever hear your teammates screaming at you to get "back 10" it is probable that the other team has just been awarded a penalty kick.

#### **Advantage**

In most other sports, when an infraction occurs, the flow of the game stops. In rugby, a referee does not have to call a penalty if he feels that the offending team gained no advantage or that the other team was able to capitalize on it. For example: a referee may see a knock-on occur, but wait to blow the whistle until it becomes apparent who has made subsequent gains. If the **NON**-offending team

scoops up the ball and gains 10 meters, the penalty won't be called at all. This is called "playing the advantage." The advantage law helps to keep the game flowing. The lesson learned is: **DO NOT STOP UNTIL YOU HEAR A WHISTLE!** The referee may not have seen it or may be playing the advantage.

### **The Referee**

As long as we're on the subject, let's talk a bit more about the **referee**. There is only one ref, and this is a very significant fact. When the referee does call something, his word is **LAW**. He cannot change a call once made. The important thing to remember with refs is that you can't talk back to them. Not even the coach can talk to the ref. The only folks authorized to talk to the ref during a game are the captains of each team.

Many calls in rugby are completely up to the referee's judgment -- especially those concerning foul play.

What exactly constitutes foul play? Alas, this may be the grayest area of all. Basically, there is a spirit of fair play that governs rugby. If something gets out of hand, go to your captain who can speak to the referee. **DO NOT RETALIATE**. Chances are the ref will only see you retaliatory action, and not what instigated it.

### **Sin Bin and Ejection**

The referee is the sole determiner of what constitutes foul play and a good one will keep things clean. Most refs do not put up with dirty play. For a player that repeatedly violates the Law, the ref can yellow card him. This means he's out of the game for ten minutes. His team has to play short for the duration—no substitute allowed.

A player can be given a red card and ejected from a game as the most severe resolution of a problem. Should this happen, his team **CAN'T** bring in a substitute, leaving them to play short for the rest of the game. If you get red carded, it is reported to the Texas Rugby Union and you are not allowed to play for fourteen days. Get red carded again, and you won't be allowed play for a year.



## Chapter 10

### Miscellaneous

Rugby is a continuous, flowing game with natural ebbs and surges, but no real time-outs except for injury. It has both premeditation and spontaneity. The faster you can make things happen, the more likely you will be able to score.

All sizes and shapes of people can play. Just because you're small or lanky or short—or all of the above—doesn't mean you can't play rugby.

It is an aggressive and physically demanding game. Fitness is mandatory. It's not a sport of your typical weekend warrior—you'll be winded in the first five minutes. It's a wise move to commit to a regular fitness regime.

A couple of catchwords in rugby are **go forward** and **support**. Confusingly enough, you often have to back up or pass back to support the surge forward. The overall team direction should always be aimed toward the goal line.

# Appendix 1

## Positional descriptions and attributes

Here's a brief overview of the positions and the physical attributes and positional duties

### **FORWARDS**

#### **PROP (No. 1 and No. 3)**

- Strong upper-body strength (usually this player will be shorter/stockier athlete)

- Effective participation in set pieces (scrummages and lineouts)

- Ability to add to the play in rucks and mauls

- Loose head prop (No. 1) responsible for supporting the hooker and assisting in gain the ball through put-in

- Tight head prop (No. 3) responsible for disrupting the opposition's loose head and hooker

#### **HOKKER (No. 2)**

- Possesses attributes/skills similar to those of prop

- Flexibility to allow for greater range of motion

- Ability to effectively and accurately throw the ball into the lineout

- Ability to deliver a quick strike with the foot to win possession of the ball

#### **LOCK (No. 4 and No. 5, a.k.a. Second Row)**

- Size/strength/height (the lock is often the largest player on the field)

- Ability to provide the lineout with height and the scrum with push

- Ability to add to the play in set pieces

#### **BACK ROW (No. 6 and No. 7, a.k.a Wing Forwards, Flankers, and No. 8)**

- Possesses all-around rugby skills

- Demonstrated speed

- Excellent tackling skills

- Proven ball-winning and retention skills

- Advanced tactical decision-making skills (back-row players will have their hands on the ball often).

### **BACKS**

#### **SCRUM HALF (No. 9)**

- Excellent passing skills, ability to pass quickly and accurately

- Ability to kick in defense and attack

- Ability to defend against back row moves

**FLY HALF (No. 10)**

- Responsible for initiating team attack and calling plays
- Responsible for organizing and ensuring that centers are up on defense
- Ability to handle and catch the ball cleanly and consistently
- Ability to kick on attack and defense
- Ability to handle the ball while running or while standing still

**CENTER (No. 12 and No. 13)**

- Ability to pass quickly and accurately
- Ability to tackle effectively
- Ability to handle the ball well in contact
- Ability to find the gap

**WINGER (No. 11 and No. 14)**

- Demonstrated speed
- Excellent defensive skills (this is an area that the opposition often attacks)
- Ability to counterattack deep kicks
- Ability to cover the fullback position when on the blind side of the field

**FULLBACK (No. 15)**

- Ability to kick accurately and handle the high kick
- Ability to enter the back line decisively
- Excellent counterattacking skills
- Excellent open-field tackling skills (fullback is the last line of defense)